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Ministry of Health

BRITISH COLUMBIANS CONTINUE TO ENJOY RECORD LONGEVITY

VICTORIA – The new 2006 Vital Statistics Annual Report confirms that British Columbians continue to live longer than ever before, Health Minister George Abbott announced today.

The age standardized mortality rate – which reached a historic low in 2005 – was down again in 2006.

"British Columbians have one of the highest life expectancies in the world," said Abbott. "Despite our aging population, British Columbian seniors are healthier and more active, and they are living longer than ever before."

An increase in the average age at death means B.C.'s population will continue to get older on average. British Columbians born in 2006 can expect to live an average of 80.9 years compared to 77.44 years in the previous generation, 25 years ago.

The latest numbers in the British Columbia Vital Statistics 135th Annual Report also show that in addition to the continuing decline in the overall rates of death from cancer and heart disease, the province is starting to see what could be an encouraging trend in declining mortality from diabetes. This finding supports the current focus on the importance and potential benefits of primary care and health promotion to tackle these health-care challenges.

"The annual report from the BC Vital Statistics Agency reinforces our efforts to engage all levels of government and the private sector, as well as schools and communities in ActNow BC, to continue to increase physical activity and healthy eating among British Columbians, eliminate tobacco use and promote healthy choices in pregnancy," said Minister of State for ActNow BC Gordon Hogg.

The number of births and marriages continues to rise as do caesarean deliveries, reflecting the increasing number of mothers aged 35 and over giving birth. The average age of a mother giving birth in B.C. is 29.9 years – which has remained steady since 2004. The number of low birth weight infants has declined.

"What's important now is to stay the course, to continue our strong prevention and primary care strategies, so that, ultimately, we see the health of B.C.'s population improving overall," said provincial health officer Dr. Perry Kendall.

More than 1,700 public and private sector contributors provide data for the Vital Statistics Annual Report, including marriage commissioners, licensors, religious representatives, funeral homes, coroners, hospitals, physicians and government agents.

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The 2006 Vital Statistics Annual Report is available online at www.vs.gov.bc.ca/stats/annual/index.html.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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